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National Park Service

2/25/91

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Covington Downtown Commercial Historic District (Boundary Increase)
Kenton County, KENTUCKY

BOUNDARY INCREASE APPROVAL

for Keeper Patrick Andrews 4/11/91

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3. Number of Resources within property

Contributing buildings	11
Non contributing buildings	5
Total	16

7. Description

The Covington Downtown Commercial Historic District (listed in the National Register, June 8, 1983) consists of a relatively intact group of late nineteenth century and early - to mid-twentieth century commercial buildings, some associated residential structures, and a sprinkling of institutional and religious structures. The area proposed as the district expansion consists of the south side of West Seventh Street between Madison Avenue and Washington Street, the east side of the 700 and 800 block of Washington Street, both the north and south sides of West Eight Street between Madison Avenue and Washington Street and the north side of West Ninth Street between Madison Avenue and Washington Street not already in the present district. This expansion area is almost completely surrounded by the existing district except for a small area to the west bounded by the elevated railroad tracks. Almost all building types found in the existing district are found in the area proposed as the district expansion.

As with the current district, the expansion area's development was greatly aided by the 1853 Kentucky Central Railroad (K.C.R.R.) freight depot on the west side of Washington Street between Seventh and Eighth Streets. The district expansion area benefited more so because of its immediate proximity. The downtown commercial district developed first as a low density manufacturing and wholesale area -- as evidenced by the market on West Seventh Street (see Map A) -- to a high density financial and retail district. This was especially true along Pike Street and Madison Avenue, the two major thoroughfares of the area. However, the area in the immediate vicinity of the depot developed differently. Large scale manufacturing, especially lumber mills, as well as flour mills, blacksmiths and livery stables were prevalent, interspersed with saloons, restaurants, barbershops and a few scattered dwellings. Most of these concerns required large buildings and large

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yards, not usually found in downtown commercial districts, but their proximity to the freight depot was vital.

Many of the businesses in the proposed area were related to the construction industry. As construction in Covington slowed in the early twentieth century, they closed or moved on, some aided by devastating fires, a problem inherent with lumber yards. These empty buildings and lots became valuable assets to the downtown area as the automobile began to take its hold on American culture. What is labelled as the Jos. Humpnert Lumber Yard on the north side of West Eighth Street all the way through to West Seventh Street on the 1894 Sanborn Map (Map A) became a parking lot as early as 1931 and has remained a parking lot to this day (Map B).

The growth in the popularity of the automobile was responsible for a new wave of development in the expansion area as well as the downtown commercial district. The 1930's and 1940's witnessed the arrival of several new, large businesses. The availability of adjacent parking was certainly a factor in the decision of Sears, Roebuck and Company to construct their downtown Covington store at 13 West Seventh Street in 1935 as well as for the Albers Supermarket chain to build a large store building next door to Sears in 1937. Albers advertised its West Eighth Street parking lot as proudly as their merchandise, and a 1940's photograph shows the public market on West Seventh Street, directly in front of Sears and Albers, partially converted into parking. By 1937 Sears expanded by adding a second story and constructing a large two story building at 20 Washington Street as its warehouse, farm store and filling and service station.

The rest of the expansion district also experienced several changes in the 1930's. The Christ Gospel Tabernacle Church had established itself at 32 West Eighth Street by 1936. Its pastor, the Rev. J. Thomas Johnson, resided at 730 Washington Street and ran the filling station at the northeast corner of Washington and West Eighth Streets, between his church and his home. Across Eighth Street several garages had replaced blacksmith shops and the Dixie Wholesale Grocers, Inc. had moved into the former J.A. Brownfield Sash Co. building at 35 West Eighth Street by the late 1930's. Overall, the character of the southern part of the expansion area remained a mix of industrial and commercial, and remains so to this day.

The expansion area developed independently from the existing district in the mid- to late-nineteenth century when it remained primarily industrial unlike the retail development of the downtown along Pike Street and Madison Avenue. However, during the first half of the twentieth century, the area proposed as the Downtown Commercial

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Historic District Expansion became a vital asset to the continuing viability of Covington's downtown as it provided valuable land for new building sites, parking and automobile servicing. These contributions are often overlooked as twentieth century development is often disregarded as having historical merit. Certainly most of the expansion area can be regarded as the service side of the Downtown Commercial Historic District, but its industries, small businesses, residences, and twentieth century commercial/retail buildings are all interrelated and consistent with the history and development of the downtown district.

Expansion Area Historic Integrity

The expansion area consists of a wide variety of both historic and non-historic buildings, dating from circa 1870 to the 1970's. The residential structures are all late nineteenth century and are typical of the city of Covington: most are two or two and one-half stories tall, brick masonry, with stonework or some decorative detailing in the cornices. Most of the residences in the expansion area have remained residential. The commercial structures are less uniform as there exist examples of both late nineteenth and twentieth century construction.

The earlier buildings are brick masonry and the later are glazed brick or block or concrete block buildings. Though none of the expansion area buildings were particularly ornate, many of them have retained their original detailing and materials, and relatively few have undergone drastic or irreversible changes to their storefronts or street level facades.

Inventory of Features in the Proposed District Expansion Area

1. #13 W. Seventh Street - The former Sears Building
- C The first floor was built by Sears, Roebuck and Company in 1935 as the Covington branch store. The ornamental stone banding and glazed tile entry accents were incorporated in the original structure. In 1937 the second story was added by simply raising the parapet cap to the second story and adding the metal casement windows above the storefront. Constructed in glazed masonry block with a buff brick facade, it is a modest though basically intact example of the Art Moderne style of commercial architecture. Sears remained there until 1976. Today it is an office and meeting center after having undergone an approved Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit renovation in 1989. The street facade is intact with all the original masonry work, and the new glass storefront and entry is of a compatible design (Photo #1).

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2. #25 W. Seventh Street

- C Built in 1937 by the Cincinnati based Albers Supermarket grocery store chain, this buff brick building with simple stone detailing was from 1937 until 1970 Albers Supermarket & Dairy Bar on the first floor and Mergard's Covington Bowling Alleys on the second floor. The original storefront has been faced with wood shingles and trim, however it is still partially evident beneath. The second story brick and ornamental stone banding and trim are original, as are the metal windows, although two of the nine windows have been modified to accept air conditioning units. A large circa 1950's electric sign is attached at the east end of the street facade but it is surface mounted and has not permanently altered the facade (Photo #2,3).

3. #720 Washington Street

- C Built by 1937 by Sears, Roebuck and Company as a warehouse, farm supply store and filling and service station, this two story utilitarian commercial building is faced with glazed yellow brick on its street elevation. Sears remained there until 1976, the building now houses a charitable organization. The original brick and stonework are intact, as are the second story metal casement windows. The first floor openings have been filled in or modified, but their original outlines are evident (Photo #4).

4. #722 Washington Street

- NC This one story concrete block building was built prior to 1928 by the R. Michels Welding Company. They remained there until the mid 1960's. The textured block facade has since been refaced with a multi-color brick and the openings have been drastically modified. The building now contains a small sports publication (Photo #5).

5. #726-728 Washington Street

- C This two and one half story brick commercial structure with an elaborate wood Italianate cornice was built by 1877. Originally constructed as two attached buildings, through much of the nineteenth century it was occupied on part of the first floor by a saloon and restaurant; the K.C.R.R. general offices and other businesses occupied the remainder. The second floor has traditionally been rooms to rent, all typical uses to have developed across the street from a railroad freight depot. In the late 1930s there was again a barber, a restaurant and furnished rooms. The building is now the offices of a construction company. Except for replacement window sash on the second floor, the building's nineteenth century street facade is virtually intact (Photo #6).

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6. #730 Washington Street

- C One of the few residences in the proposed expansion area, this house was built circa 1900 by Bernard Wolking, a plasterer. It is a typical Covington late Victorian brick house with a steep front and ell gable. The original single entrance is on the south side, though a second door has been added to the front when the building was converted to multi-family. The house has a concrete block foundation, unpainted brick masonry walls and simple carved stone lintels. The south gable has two quarter circle attic windows flanking the chimney. This house has experienced few exterior alterations through its history, the most obvious is the second entry on the street facade, as well as the rather inappropriate though easily removed storm doors (Photo #7).

7. #34 W. Eighth Street - northeast corner of Washington and W. Eighth Streets

- NC On the 1877 Sanborn Map, the K.C.R.R. station was located at this corner. After they moved, the building housed a coal office and a "colored dwelling" and in 1897, an undertaker. In 1931 the site was vacant, but by 1936 the Rev. J. Thomas Johnson of the Christ Gospel Tabernacle Church next door had a filling station located there. The lower eastern portion of the building, with the double hung windows flanking the door is composed of glazed block and probably dates to the 1930's. The large garage door addition is relatively recent and the pitched roof over it is about five years old. Though the building has consistently been either a filling - service station or an auto sales facility, many alterations both in volume and materials have taken place and little is recognizable of the original structure (Photo #8).

8. #32 W. Eighth Street

- C The cornerstone on the existing church building dates at least the front two story structure to 1940. The one story body of the church may be earlier, since the Christ Gospel Tabernacle Church was at this location from about 1936 to 1960. The building has a cut stone foundation, glazed block and ornamental brick walls, and a flat roof. Except for the Gothic-inspired arched windows above the Neoclassical main entry, the fenestration is two over two double hung windows in the two story front section and ornamental stained glass at the sides of the one story rear section. The pedimented entry may not date to 1940, though it is not a recent alteration; but the remainder of the exterior is intact (Photo #9).

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9. 15-17 West Eighth Street

C This pair of attached rowhouses was built prior to 1877. The two and-one-half story brick structure has plain stone lintels and sills and two over two double hung sash. It has recently been sensitively rehabbed and is a fine though modest example of the late nineteenth century housing stock in Covington (Photo #10).

10. 19 W. Eighth Street

NC The original part of this building is a two story brick dwelling built before 1877. Since the early 1930's a garage has been listed at this address, though the existing large garage building was built much later, now completely engulfing the once residential structure (Photo #11).

11. 25 W. Eighth Street

C This long and narrow lot was the location of the J. Gouvion and Sons Carriage Factory and Blacksmith shop from the 1890's until about 1917. The present masonry building with a wire cut brick facade and simple brick detailing has a stepped parapet with terra cotta coping. This garage building was built circa 1930 and has remained relatively unchanged (Photo #12).

12. 35 W. Eighth Street - Dixie Wholesale Grocers, Inc.

C In 1877 there stood on this site the Covington Conservatory of Music in what was then a residential block. By the 1880's, with the elevated railroad to the west completed, the complexion of the neighborhood changed drastically. By 1900 the three story brick J.A. Brownfield Planing Mill and Sash Company, the present building, was built. By 1936 Dixie Wholesale Grocers had located there. They have remained on site to this day, having purchased and demolished houses to the east and to the west along West Eighth Street, thus isolating the building and giving it an even more commanding presence in the area. Today, the Dixie Wholesale Grocers is a complex of buildings extending along the 800 block of Washington Street and the north side of West Ninth Street to the south. The original building is an elegantly simple warehouse with rows of large six over six double hung sash windows with arched brick tops and stone sills. The regular rhythm of these windows is interrupted on the main (north) elevation by an arched driveway opening on the first floor, a triple arched window on the second floor and by an elaborate multipaned triple window with a semicircular transom on the third. The gabled roof has some decorative brick corbelling on the front cornice. A late twentieth century two-story wing extends to the west of the original building and several second and third story connections

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join the original building to adjoining structures. This large scale building serves as a link between the downtown commercial district and the manufacturing and storage district adjacent to the elevated railroad tracks to the west (Photo #13,14).

13. 818 Washington Street

C This complex of buildings is part of the Dixie Wholesale Grocers. The north three story building is a turn of the century brick commercial structure which connects on the second and third floors with 35 West Eighth Street, and was probably built as an addition to that building. Two third-story openings are evident in the Washington Street elevation though they have been filled in. A metal fire escape is now attached to that facade. The north elevation is relatively intact. The two-story section to the south is a mid-twentieth century addition which serves as a loading dock off of West Ninth Street (Photo #15).

14. #18 W. Ninth Street

NC This very large concrete block warehouse is also part of the Dixie Wholesale Grocers complex. It dates to the late 1970's (Photo #16).

15. 16 W. Ninth Street

NC This one story concrete block garage building dates to the second half of the twentieth century. (Photo #17)

16. #14 W. Ninth Street

C This triple bay brick masonry residence was built in the 1880's. It has a simple bracketed Italianate cornice, simple cut stone lintels, sills and water table and a stone foundation. The second story windows have been replaced but the remainder of the house is relatively intact. The original cast and wrought iron fence still borders the property at the sidewalk. The house has remained residential (Photo #18).

The area proposed as an expansion to the existing Covington Downtown Commercial District is both architecturally and functionally consistent with the original district and has experienced a complementary if not parallel historic development.

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8.

Significance

The Covington Downtown Commercial District (National Register, listed June 8, 1983) contains the past and present financial, commercial and legal centers of the city as well as some industrial, institutional and residential elements. The proposed district expansion area is consistent if not complementary to the existing district both in architectural style and function, since they share a common history and development as Covington witnessed the transitions from river traffic to rail to automobile. Both areas are important to the history of the city; as combined they constitute the late nineteenth and twentieth century commercial and industrial core of Covington. Architecturally, there are few outstanding structures, but there exists a consistency of quality, modest yet solid. This modesty of architecture can be expected of a city that never grew beyond a population of approximately 50,000, as well as a city located so near a major metropolitan area as Cincinnati, Ohio. However, in the century between 1850 and 1950 the downtown commercial district and the proposed expansion area did experience a great deal of development which has formed the downtown into what it is today.

The initial growth of the downtown was spurred by the Kentucky Central Railroad, which connected Covington to the rest of the state in 1853. Until then the city's early development was along the banks of the Ohio and Licking Rivers and was closely associated with the City of Cincinnati to the north and Newport to the east. Both the freight and passenger depots were located on Washington Street between Seventh and Eighth Streets. While local development at first was rather low density commercial and industrial, it quickly evolved into higher density retail and business, especially along Pike Street and Madison Avenue, both old turnpikes leading to Lexington.

In the late 1880's the passenger depot (Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad) was moved to Russell and Pike Streets, one block to the west, with new elevated tracks. The freight depot remained on Washington Street as part of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad System, and continued there until 1960. As a result, the area immediately in the vicinity of the freight depot, including the proposed expansion area, remained more industrial in character well into the twentieth century. Businesses surrounding the depot included the New England Distillery to the west (in the existing district), the City Flour Mills at 708 Washington Street, three lumber yards and planing mills on West Eighth Street including the J.A. Brownfield Sash Company at 35 West Eighth Street, a carpet cleaner at 710 Washington Street, the J. Gouvion & Son Carriage and Blacksmith Shop at 27 West Eighth Street, The Covington Machine

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Works at 36 West Ninth Street (all in the proposed expansion area) as well as numerous supporting businesses such as saloons, barbershops and hotels, and typically, several scattered dwellings. (Map A)

The entire downtown area witnessed major transitions in the early twentieth century. The first was due to the levelling off of growth in the city of Covington. Many of the businesses in the freight depot area were related to the construction trade and by 1930 most of them had disappeared. For instance, the last remaining planing mill, the J.A. Brownfield Planing Mill and Sash Company, was replaced by 1936 with the Dixie Wholesale Grocers, Inc. (See Photo #13, 14). By far the most important development of the twentieth century was the advent of the automobile. Since the downtown commercial district had developed around two major arterial roads (Pike Street and Madison Avenue) as well as the railroad system, the area experienced another wave of growth in the 1930's and 1940's. The vacant lots and buildings left by the mills and industries were quickly converted to parking areas, garages, filling stations and most importantly into new building sites for several large retail concerns. The largest of these was Sears, Roebuck and Company. Within three years, 1935-1938, Sears built and expanded a retail store at 13 West Seventh Street (see photo #1) and built a farm supply and automotive service store at 720 Washington Street (see Photo #4). In 1937, Albers Supermarkets of Cincinnati built a two story building next door to Sears for a branch grocery store and second floor bowling alley (see Photo #2). Nearby, at the corner of Madison Avenue and West Seventh Street (within the existing district), F.W. Woolworth's built a modern new store, circa 1940 (Background of Photo #3). Easy automobile access and available parking contributed to their success. The proposed expansion area contains much of the most recent downtown construction and is therefore representative of the early-to mid-twentieth century viability of the Covington Downtown Commercial District.

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10.

Acreage of property: 5.7 acres

Verbal Boundary Description

The area proposed as the expansion of the Covington Downtown Commercial District is outlined on Map B.

Verbal Boundary Justification

The area proposed as the expansion of the Covington Downtown Commercial District is surrounded on the north, east and south by the existing district. The existing district, for the most part, is concentrated along two major axes, Pike Street and Madison Avenue. However it has a strong physical boundary on the southwest and that is the elevated railroad. The only exception to that boundary is the proposed expansion area, and once included the boundary line along the railroad would be intact. The elevated tracks form not only a physical boundary but a visual one as well and are a logical border of the district.

There is one exception to the proposed district boundary and that is the long narrow block along the west side of Washington Street between West Seventh and West Eighth Street. This is the site of the former freight depot and is now a city parking lot.

11. Form prepared by:

Alexandra Kornilowicz-Weldon
1923 Scott Street
Covington, Kentucky 41014-1222

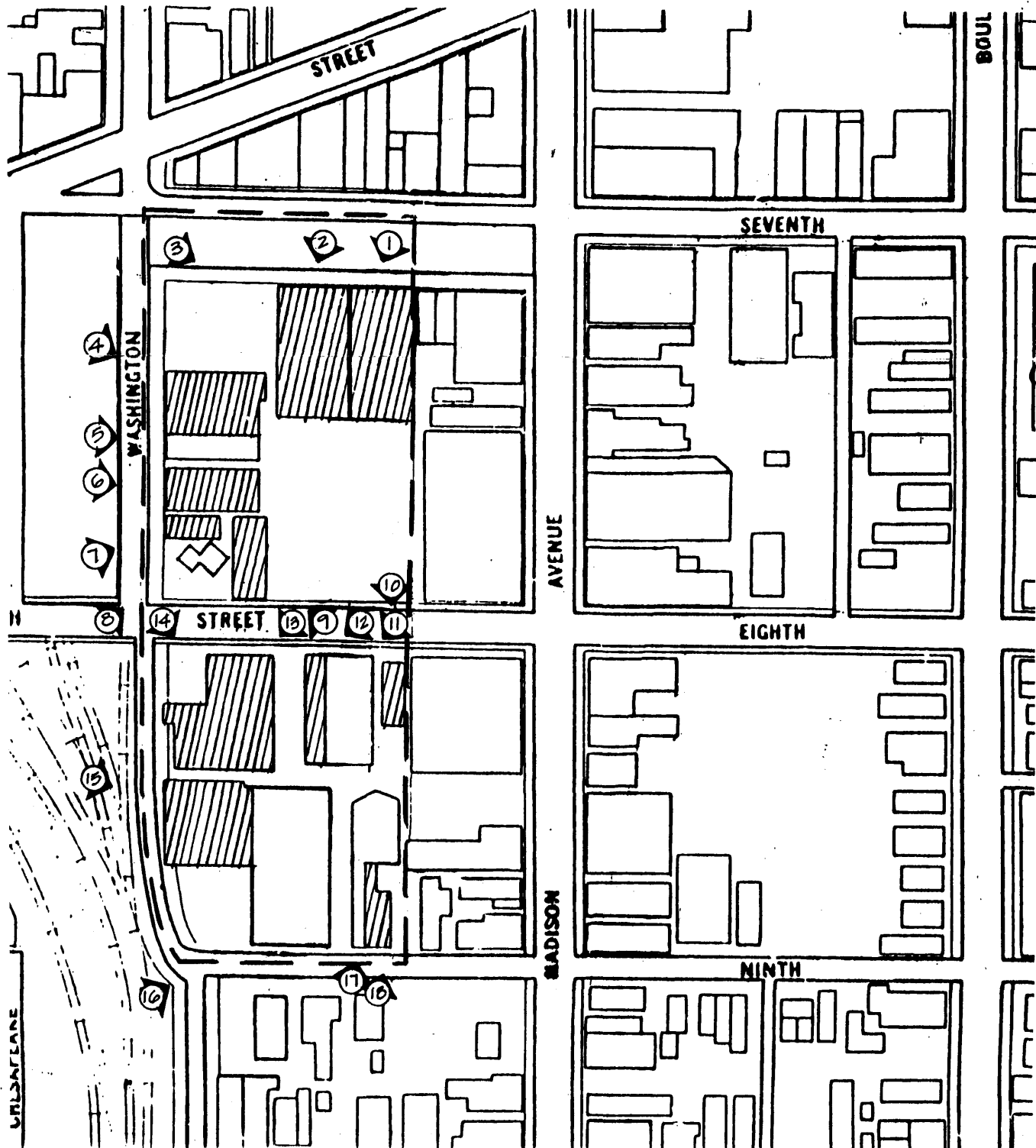
11-26-90
(606)581-1335

COVINGTON DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

PROPOSED EXPANSION

MAP C - KEY TO PHOTOGRAPHS

- BOUNDARY OF PROPOSED EXPANSION AREA
-  CONTRIBUTING BUILDING
-  NON-CONTRIBUTING BUILDING (WITHIN BOUNDARY ONLY)



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Information pertaining to all photographs:

Covington, Kenton County, Downtown
Commercial District Proposed Expansion

Photographers: Alexandria Korniloicz-Weldon
City of Covington Staff

Date of Photographs: October 1990

Location of original negatives:
City of Covington
Dept. of Economic Development
638 Madison Avenue
Covington, Kentucky 41011

Information pertaining to individual photographs:

Photo No.

- | | |
|----|---|
| 1 | 13 W. Seventh Street - the former Sears Building
North elevation, camera facing southwest. |
| 2 | 25 W. Seventh Street
North elevation, camera facing south. |
| 3 | 25 W. Seventh Street
North & west elevations, camera facing east. |
| 4 | 720 Washington Street
West & north elevations, camera facing southeast. |
| 5 | 722 Washington Street
West elevation, camera facing east. |
| 6 | 726-728 Washington Street
West & north elevations, camera facing east. |
| 7 | 730 Washington Street
West & south elevations, camera facing northeast. |
| 8 | 34 W. Eighth Street
Southwest elevation, camera facing northeast. |
| 9 | 32 W. Eighth Street
South & east elevations, camera facing northwest. |
| 10 | 15-17 W. Eighth Street
North elevation, camera facing south. |
| 11 | 19 W. Eighth Street
North & east elevations, camera facing southwest. |
| 12 | 25 W. Eighth Street
North elevation, camera facing southwest. |
| 13 | 35 W. Eighth Street
North & east elevations, camera facing southwest. |

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- 14 35 W. Eight Street
North & west elevations, camera facing southwest.
- 15 818 Washington Street
West elevation, camera facing southwest.
- 16 18 W. Ninth Street
West & south elevations, camera facing northeast.
- 17 16 W. Eighth Street
South elevation, camera facing north.
- 18 14 W. Eighth Street
South elevation, camera facing northeast.

NATRGPHO